

to look to the west, and saw a large number of Buzzards, more than two miles away, crossing a line back and forth, from north to south; and I soon discovered that they were coming eastward. It did not occur to me that they were tracing the tract of tainted air from that pot full of putrescence. I kept quietly about my business and the Buzzards kept about theirs; and in less than twenty minutes from the time I first discovered them, they were on hand, wheeling about that woodshed. They were fifty or sixty strong. They staid around during an hour or two, when they gave up the search and left for other parts. Here was, therefore, a cone of tainted air, with its apex in that pot. It was drifted rapidly to the west, rising at an exceedingly low angle. The Buzzards crossed that cone back and forth so accurately that I could mark its limits almost exactly. Now there is no possible hypothesis applicable to the solution of these Buzzards' actions, but that they smelt that stench more than two miles. I might give many other notes on this matter, but I deem this perfectly apropos and convincing.

I have great regard for Mr. Audubon, Mr. Bachman, and Mr. Darwin, for what they have well done; but, in a series of experiments for ascertaining a great scientific fact, that these men should so blunder, and so falsely reason, is to me certainly astonishing. In attacking their conclusion, in this case, I feel that they are merely human.

FOURTH MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

THE fourth meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union was held at the National Museum in Washington, November 16, 17, and 18, 1886. The number of members in attendance was about the same as at previous meetings, namely, about twenty Active Members and thirteen Associates. The official report of the Secretary stated that but a single death had occurred among the members during the past year,—that of Mr. Snowdon Howland, of Newport, R I., an Associate Member, well known as an

oölogist of note.* There is at present no vacancy in the class of Foreign Members (limited to 25), and there are only four vacancies in the class of Active Members (limited to 50). The Corresponding Members (limited to 100) number 69, and the Associate Members (unlimited as to number), 112.

The Treasurer's report made known the fact of a considerable deficit, partly on account of 'The Auk,' and partly on account of the publication of the 'Code and Check-List.' While the assets of the Union, consisting of its unsold publications, much more than offset this deficiency, it was deemed desirable to take measures to at once relieve the treasury of debt. It was therefore voted to open a paper for voluntary subscriptions to meet the present indebtedness, the subscribers being allowed to receive, at their option, back volumes of 'The Auk,' or copies of the 'Code and Check-List,' to the amount of their subscriptions.† In reference to the future, it was stated that there seemed to be little danger of any deficit on account of 'The Auk,' or from any other source, and that the financial prospects of the Union gave no cause for uneasiness.

The report from the Council included the following nominations for membership, namely, to the class of Active Members, Messrs. William Dutcher and Jonathan Dwight, Jr., of New York City, and W. E. D. Scott, of Tarpon Springs, Florida (formerly of Arizona); to the class of Corresponding Members, Messrs. T. Büttikofer, Leyden, Holland; M. Mamèye, Tokio, Japan; Robert MacFarlane, Winnipeg, Manitoba; W. E. Brooks, Milton, Ontario. To the class of Associate Members there were 44 nominations. All the nominees were later duly elected.

The Council also recommended that the Union take measures to become an incorporated society, and that a committee be appointed to draw up a new Constitution, accompanied by appropriate By-Laws, for adoption under the Act of Incorporation. Later in the session the Union voted to become incorporated, and instructed the Council to take the necessary steps to secure its incorporation, and also to draft a new Constitution and By-Laws, for adoption at the next annual meeting.‡

* See Auk, III, p. 144.

† The prompt responses to this appeal, it may be stated, have satisfactorily met the emergency.

‡ The Council appointed as a committee on incorporation the President and Professor Baird, and as a committee to draft the new Constitution and By-Laws the President, Professor Baird, Dr. Coues, Mr. Henshaw, and Dr. Stejneger.

The reports of Committees proved of special interest, and showed commendable activity on the part of their members. The chairman of the Committee on the Protection of North American Birds, Mr. George B. Sennett, gave a detailed and carefully prepared report on the work of this committee, which has held, during the year, twenty meetings at which a quorum was present for the transaction of business, besides several informal sessions. The committee had endeavored to awaken public interest in behalf of the birds, by giving information as to the extent of their destruction for millinery and other needless purposes; believing that a proper public presentation of these facts would go far toward checking this great evil. It has also drafted what it deems a suitable law for the protection of song and non-game birds, the enactment of which in the various States it not only recommends, but which it is taking measures to secure. The proposed law has been practically adopted by the State of New York, and seems likely to meet with favor among legislators in other States. They have published two 'Bulletins,' one of sixteen quarto pages, the other of eight, large editions of which have been gratuitously circulated, and of which copies may be obtained on application to members of the committee. Notwithstanding the considerable outlay of money involved, the committee, by the aid of a few outside contributions, had met all the expenses incurred, and had no indebtedness to report to the Union. It has been greatly aided in its work by the 'Science' and 'Forest and Stream' Publishing Companies, these journals having been, respectively, the mediums of the original publication of the 'Bulletins,' which were later issued in pamphlet form in large editions.

The Audubon Society, an outgrowth of the Committee's work, proves a most efficient co-worker. Under the fostering care of the 'Forest and Stream,' this society already numbers some 16,000 members, with over 300 local secretaries, scattered throughout the United States and in various foreign countries. A special report of the work of the Audubon Society, from Dr. George B. Grinnell, to whose efforts the Society owes its existence and success, was included in the report of the committee. The committee also acknowledged the important aid it had received from the American Humane Association which, through its President, the Rev. G. E. Gordon, had given it very valuable

assistance. The public press had also warmly seconded its efforts, and it felt justified in claiming that its labors had yielded most encouraging results, and that the future was full of promise of further successes. The public was thoroughly aroused to the importance of enforcing strenuous measures for the better protection of our birds, and the sympathy and assistance received by the committee in its work was full of encouragement to further effort.*

The report of the committee was accepted as a report of progress, and the committee continued.

The chairman of the Committee on the Geographical Distribution and Migration of North American Birds, Dr. C. Hart Merriam, gave a very satisfactory account of the work of his committee, dealing particularly with the economical aspects of its work. As already stated in the pages of *'The Auk,'*† the work undertaken by this committee has practically been assumed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and has now reached the status of a distinct Division of this Bureau of the Government, under the title *'Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy,'* the scope of the work under Government auspices having been broadened to include the economic relations of mammals to agriculture as well as those of birds. Last June, through the influence of Senator Warner Miller, of New York, not only was this important change secured, but also an appropriation of \$10,000 for carrying on the work for the present year. This appropriation was for the "promotion of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy; an investigation of the food-habits, distribution, and migration of birds and mammals in relation to agriculture, horticulture, and forestry; for publishing reports thereon; and for drawings, and travelling and other expenses in the practical work of the division." Dr. Merriam has associated with him as scientific assistants Dr. A. K. Fisher and Prof. W. B. Barrows.

Dr. Merriam, in his report, referred especially to his investigations in relation to the Bobolink—the *'Rice Bird'* of the South—

* For notices of the work of this committee, its organization and membership, see *Auk* III, pp. 143 and 287, and its *'Bulletins,'* entitled as follows: American Ornithologists' Union. Bulletin No. 1. of the Committee on Protection of Birds. Destruction of our Native Birds, pp. 1-16. Published originally in *'Science,'* No. 160, Feb. 26, 1886.

Bulletin No. 2. Protection of Birds by Legislation, pp. 1-8. Published originally in *'Forest and Stream,'* Nov. 11, 1886.

† See *Auk*, III, pp. 117, 416.

and the English Sparrow, and in less detail to the investigations of the food habits of our birds in general. He gave a very interesting and detailed account of his observations in the rice fields of South Carolina and Georgia, and Dr. Fisher related his observations in the rice fields of Louisiana.

The work of collecting data respecting bird migration is still continued, the number of observers to whom schedules have been sent during the last year being fully up to the average of past years.

As yet none of the reports prepared by the division superintendents have been published but several are nearly ready for the press, as is also a special report on the English Sparrow; the publication of some these reports has been unexpectedly and unavoidably delayed, but their early appearance may now be anticipated.

The reports of the two committees elicited interesting remarks bearing mainly on the subject of the economic relations of birds to man, and on their protection, the work of the two committees being more or less inter-related at many points.

The reading of scientific papers occupied the third day's session. Col. N. S. Goss, of Kansas, presented a paper entitled 'Additions to the Catalogue of the Birds of Kansas' (published in this number of 'The Auk,' pp. 7-11), and another on 'The Number of Eggs constituting a Normal Set.'

Mr. George B. Sennett gave a paper on 'The Snowy Plover of Texas,' with an exhibition of specimens.

A paper from Dr. Ira Sayles was read on the 'Sense of Smell in the Turkey Buzzard' (see this number of 'The Auk,' p. 5).

Mr. Frederick A. Lucas presented interesting notes of his experience in capturing sea birds (Procellariidæ) (see *antèa*, pp. 1-7).

Dr. L. Stejneger gave a short résumé of the methods of the celebrated German ornithologist, Chr. L. Brehm, illustrated by a good series of a South European Ring Thrush (*Turdus alpestris* Brehm), which prejudice and want of material have prevented the European ornithologists from recognizing as distinct from the northern typical *Turdus torquatus*. Dr. Stejneger in rediscovering this interesting and strongly marked species was able to substantiate the observations made by Brehm, and he predicted that if European ornithology be studied on a plan similar, and with similar means, to that applied here in America, still

more important disclosures would result. For such a study the Brehm collection, which since his death has been inaccessible, would be indispensable.

Other papers presented by title were 'The Summer Birds of the Bras d'Or Region of Cape Breton Island,' by Jonathan Dwight, Jr. (see *antèda*, pp. 13-16); 'The Summer Birds of the Presidential Range of the White Mountains, N. H.,' by Mr. Arthur P. Chadbourne; and 'Notes on the Night Migration of Birds at Cleveland, Ohio,' by Mr. Wm. F. Dærtenbach.

A committee on Avian Anatomy was appointed, consisting of Drs. Coues and Shufeldt.

Resolutions of thanks were tendered Professor Baird for his kindness in securing the lecture room of the U. S. National Museum as a place of meeting for the Fourth Congress of the Union; to Mr. George T. Angell, President of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for securing protection during the past year to the Gulls and Terns breeding on Muskeget Island, Mass., by placing an agent there, deputized as a game constable, to prevent the destruction of these birds; to the Rev. G. E. Gordon, President of the American Humane Association, for assistance and co-operation rendered the Committee on Protection of North American Birds; also to the 'Science' Publishing Company, and to the 'Forest and Stream' Publishing Company, for valuable assistance rendered the same committee, and especially to the latter Company for its invaluable services in behalf of the Audubon Society.

The election of officers resulted in the re-election of the officers of 1886. At the close of a highly satisfactory three days' session the Union adjourned to meet in Boston, October 10, 1887.

RECENT LITERATURE.

Pleske on the Birds of the Kola Peninsula.—The second part of Mr. Theodor Pleske's valuable work* has just come to hand, and treats of

* Uebersicht | der | Säugethiere und Vögel | der | Kola-Halbinsel. | 'Von Theodor Pleske, | Cand. d. Naturwissenschaften. | —Theil II. Vögel und Nachträge. | — (Der Akademie vorgelegt am 5. März 1885.) | —Aus den "Beiträgen zur Kenntniss des Russischen Reiches und der angren- | zenden Länder Asiens, zweite Folge," besonders abgedruckt. | —St. Petersburg, 1886. | Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. | Wass. Ostr., 9 Lin., No. 12.—8 vo. iv + 515.